



The Good News Letter

October 2011

A monthly publication of First Baptist Church, Gaston

Vol. 37 Issue 10

Jesus: Mascot or Monarch?

David Bryant ~ Copied with permission



I attended a high school that is football-crazy. It boasted a stadium seating 20,000 and produced nearly twenty-five state championship teams. The team is called the Massillon Tigers. Our mascot requires a taller student to dress up like a tiger—I mean, wearing a real tiger skin! He inherits a name of affection: Obie the Tiger.

Here's how a mascot works. At times in the midst of a game, if we're falling behind, the coach signals time-out. Because the crowd needs to be stirred to cheer more enthusiastically for the team's victory, the uniformed tiger runs his stripes onto the field. Seeing Obie doubles the crowd's determination to celebrate the champions we hope to be. After all, we are the Massillon Tigers!

But at each appearance, interestingly, Obie's performance is very brief. Then he disappears again, sent to the sidelines, put on hold until the next setback. He has served his useful purpose well. Still, in the final analysis, the tiger never really gets involved beyond re-igniting cries of confidence, other than giving us an identity to boast about.

To be sure, Obie stirs up a certain kind of passion. But it's not really about him. It's really about the team, and even more about the fans. The team designs the plays, runs the patterns, throws the blocks, reaches the goal, claims the credit. The fans jump with joy, declare their superior identity over the losers, and boast that *they* are "the Massillon Tigers." Then we all go home satisfied.

Now, here's the kicker: What happens the moment our team hits a losing season? What good is the mascot then? The zeal it inspires suddenly feels hollow, even foolish. We are left with little else but embarrassing thoughts of our team's helplessness and hopelessness. Then, how quickly passion heads south—for Obie, for our team, for our future, for the game itself.

In so many of our churches, I fear, Jesus is

regularly deployed as our mascot. On Sunday we "trot Him out" to cheer us up, to give us new vigor and vision, to reassure us that we are "somebodies." We invite Him to reinforce for us the great things we want to do for God. We look to Him to reinvigorate our celebration of victories we think we're destined to win. He lifts our spirits. He resuscitates our souls. He rebuilds our confidence. He gives us reasons to cheer.

But then, for the rest of the week, He is pretty much relegated to the sidelines. For all practical purposes, we are the ones who call the shots. We implement the plays, scramble for first downs, and improvise in a pinch. Even if we do it in His name, we do it with little reliance on His person.

There's scant evidence that we think of ourselves as somehow utterly incapable of doing anything of eternal consequence apart from Jesus. Our promises to Him leave our daily discipleship unfazed. There is little desperation for increased manifestations of His majesty among us.

As contradictory as it may seem, many of us have redefined Jesus into someone we can both admire and ignore at the same time! To make Him a good mascot, we've redesigned Him to be reasonably convenient—someone praiseworthy, to be sure, but overall kept in reserve, useful, "on call" as required.

The truth is, Jesus' claims to the monarchy make Him the opposite of an Obie character. Instead, He encompasses in Himself the coach, quarterback, playbook, team, uniforms, cheerleader, goal post, and final championship—the "whole nine yards" (as we say)—wrapped up in one person alone.

Does this vision of His lordship take on such exalted dimensions in your life? Does it promote an exclusive love for Him—a zeal for His glory evident in your daily routines as much as in your church attendance on Sundays?

I suspect many of us have found far more fascination with the game of Christianity—

with how we are playing it and whether we are winning—than we have with the One in whose name and for whose sake the "game" exists at all.

Which may explain the reports: The membership in 80% of U.S. churches is either stagnant or dying. Tens of thousands of congregations are wrestling with a leveling off of financial giving, a growing shortfall of laborers, and an atmosphere of apathy toward evangelism, compassion ministries, and the global mission of Christ's kingdom that seems endemic.

Without an adequate view of the incomparable majesty of Jesus as King, Christians quickly revert to the role of spiritual "couch potatoes." We get involved with God's purposes in Christ at arm's length, at best. For many of us, "amazing grace" has ceased to be genuinely amazing because our vision of God's Son is no longer genuinely amazing.

George Barna, respected demographer of American Christianity, concluded extensive research a short time back with this troubling summary: "Overall, Christian ministry is stuck in a deep rut...Too many Christians and churches in America have traded in spiritual passion for empty rituals, clever methods and mindless practices. The challenge to today's Church is not methodological. It is a challenge to resuscitate the spiritual passion and fervor of the nation's Christians."

The time has come to pray for the Holy Spirit to restore to the Church a "Person-driven" walk with the everlasting Son of the Father. The good news is this: If we turn back to exult once again in our Savior as the Monarch He is—if we spread this grander message about God's Son to God's people, inviting them to rediscover in His reign all the hope we are meant to have—we can create a life-saving paradigm shift in our lives and inside the Church. We can trigger a re-ignition of our passion for Him as Lord of all.

-Submitted by Pastor Larry



OCTOBER MUSIC NOTES

"Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower."

Albert Camus



What a beautiful way to think of Autumn.. as a second spring. That is what our Savior does for us... He gives us a second spring! We all have made past mistakes and may even currently be in the middle of one of them now.

However, we serve a God that forgives and gives us another chance.

Don't miss the beauty of the autumn because the enemy has put blinders on you. Look for the beauty around you... look for the bright hope of tomorrow. Look to the Savior.

One way that you can serve our Savior this month is by helping with the Harvest Festival. We are sending flyers through the schools and are hoping for many children and families to visit us that night. And it is a great way for our church to show our community that we love the Lord and we love them. Here are some ways you can serve...

October 31st is the date.

Volunteer to:

Decorate your "trunk" for Trunk-r-Treat ~ Run a game ~ Buy and donate candy ~ Help with traffic control ~ Participate in Intentional Evangelism

PRAY!

See Rhonda Parrish or Cheryl Reynolds if you would like to volunteer for the Harvest Festival... if not, then I will just come find you! (smile)



Joyfully Serving,

Sherrell ☺



TIME TO STEP DOWN



Americans enjoy an abundance of freedoms. From what career we'll pursue to what we'll eat for lunch, we're constantly making decisions about what we want out of life. So it's hard to find peace when our plans go awry and our circumstances seem out of control.

A wise person suggested, **"For peace of mind, resign as general manager of the universe."** What if we stepped down and let God be God? He created the universe, after all. Shouldn't we trust Him to run it?

LIVING BY SON-LIGHT

Some of our days seem very dark. Sickness, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job or another struggle overshadows life. In our despair, it can be difficult to sense God's presence. If God were here, we reason, surely He'd be shining His light on our dark circumstances.

When life is bright and joyous, it's easy to sense God; the sun becomes a natural metaphor for God's Son, Jesus, the Light of the world. But even on cloudy days, the sun still shines, its presence not bound by our limited vision. And in the darkest night, the sun remains; the warmth it gave before dusk lingers, enough to preserve us into the dawning of a new day. Sometimes we even catch its reflection in the moon.

"Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning" (Psalm 30:5b, NRSV). Trust in God; even in life's dark times, the Son still shines!





Fall is here and in October we see lots of changes in the weather, the fair is in town and mission projects are everywhere.

First, we want to thank everyone for all the food, donations and prayer support for the five ladies who went to the Camille Graham Women's Prison Picnic. They had a great experience sharing with the women at the prison and all stated they received a blessing from the experience. This is an annual event. Please pray how you can be a part of this event next year.

Our church has ministered to the hungry through our GPS Center and the demand for more food items continues to grow daily. **October 9 is World Hunger Day** and we will be collecting food and/or donations for the GPS Center. One way you can help on that Sunday is bring all your change to donate for the GPS. There will be a Bread Bank on each pew and you can drop your change in the Bank. We will take care of making sure it is counted and a total reported back to the church. There will be Bread Banks in the Sunday School classes as well. We want to include everyone in this special ministry. You never know when you may have to use the services of the GPS Center. Let's help however we can.



The State Fair comes to town this month and there are mission opportunities available. The **Pre-Fair Ministry is October 10-11**. This is an opportunity to witness to the fair workers. We need baked goods (cookies, brownies, cakes) to include with the lunches for the workers and these can be brought to the church **Sunday, October 9**. Debbie Harrison will make sure that all items are delivered to the fairgrounds. The SC Baptist Association will have a booth at the fair and I'm sure they will need volunteers to help man the booth.

Everyone is invited to the **October 17 WOM Home Meeting**...this month to be held in the Fellowship Hall. **We are having a party to benefit World Crafts**. World Crafts is a program supported by WMU which aids artisans worldwide by highlighting those groups working to free women involved in human trafficking and sexual exploitation. We will have more information about this program in the bulletin several weeks before the actual party. Come join us and see some of the crafts made by women from around the world to help support themselves and build a better life.

Sunday, October 23 is PINK SUNDAY and we will be recognizing and remembering those who have had breast cancer. One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. We have many families in our church who have been affected by this disease. Please show your support that day by wearing Pink. Even the guys can participate by wearing a pink shirt and tie. Remember **WEAR YOUR PINK**.

From October 25 - November 9 we will be collecting food and household supplies for the Connie Maxwell Children's Home. The Youth Group and Life Sunday School Class will organize this mission project. More details will be in the bulletin during October & November. Remember our own Patrick Callahan and his wife Dawn are parents to a house of girls at the Connie Maxwell Facility. Let's show our support of this ministry.

The Lexington Baptist Association Office still has mission opportunities available to everyone. Ms. Linda Hite will be coordinating many Prayer Walking events. Please keep the following dates on your calendar and be in prayer for how you may wish to participate.

Prayer Walking in Lexington, SC.....Dec 7, 2011 ~ Prayer Walking in Atlanta, GA.....Nov 1-3, 2011
Prayer Walking in London, England.....Oct 6-13, 2011

Many of these events are both Prayer Walking and Mission Trips. If you are interested in participating in any of these events, please contact Linda Hite or David Lee at the Lexington Baptist Association Office at (803) 356-2543.

Coming in November we have: **November 7** Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer; Prison Packets Collection; and Project Angel Tree/Adopt-a-Family. Please pray how you can be a part of these mission opportunities.

As always thank you for your support with all our mission projects and continue to be in prayer as to how you can become involved in missions.

Love in Christ, Margie Rish & Cindy Furtick



DISCIPLESHIP

Sunday at Five

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

1 John 4:9-11 KJV

Do we value people according to the value they are to us?

At the time I am writing this, I am also preparing for our Breakaway Discipleship Class. In Breakaway we are studying core truths in order to break away from the crowd and truly live as Christians. In this week's lesson, Andy Stanley shares the example of meeting people who give him a weak, uninterested handshake.... UNTIL they learn he is the son of Charles Stanley, (founder of In Touch Ministries, pastor of First Baptist Church Atlanta, author, and speaker) then they re-shake his hand as if the first one didn't count! Andy grew up noticing that people valued him only after they learned who his father was. He emphasizes that we value the people that the people we value, value! ☺ If this is true we need to remember the core truth that **"Everybody we lay our eyes on is somebody for whom Christ died"**.

We are surrounded by people of immeasurable worth. God placed such value on them that He sent His son to die for them. Those people you don't like are people of so much worth that Jesus died for them. Every person you encounter everyday is someone for whom God sacrificed His son! **How do you treat somebody who has that much worth? What would be the outcome?**

Breakaway meets October 2nd, 9th and 16th at 5 pm. Join us!

Orientation for Bible Drill - October 2 at 5 PM



Children who are fourth, fifth, and sixth graders are eligible to participate in the Children's Bible Drill. The drill will help children increase in knowledge of the Bible, develop skills in locating books and passages, and memorize verses and the books of the Bible. They will, also, learn how to apply the Bible to their lives.

Meeting every Sunday at 5 o'clock are TeamKid (Preschool thru 6th grade), Diggin' Deeper (Adults) with Terry Pound, and Senior Adult Discipleship.

Meets at 5 pm ~ Room 200

THE JOURNEY OF GRIEF ~ Where is God in this?

Sessions are independent. You may begin at any time.



NEW MEMBERS FOR AUGUST

Alexandra Laughlin

Welcome!!



We extend our heartfelt sympathy to the family of Mrs. Wilma Funk. Mrs. Funk, one of our homebound members, passed away Sunday, September 18. A graveside service was held at 1 P. M. Wednesday, September 21, 2011, at Sunset Memorial Cemetery in St. Stephens, SC. Mrs. Funk will be missed by all.

“What are they doing up there??”

I often hear questions about what is going on in your youth ministry at First Baptist Church of Gaston. While it's not always something I'm asked directly, it is a great question that I am always eager to share answers to. Obviously, a lot has been going on and it's all to the glory of Christ! He is blessing our church in so many ways! One is through our ministry to the youth in our area, most of whom are previously “unchurched” and come from severe economic and social environments.



God is growing this group according to His will and He's doing it without the trappings of gimmicks and enticements. He's growing it through a stubborn adherence to a calling that we preach the complete truth of His Word. He's growing it through a determination to challenge our youth to dig deeper into the Word, to grow in faith and to think beyond self. This ministry is growing through the efforts of an excited and energetic group of youth reaching out to their friends! Youth who are seeking and, in turn, reaching out to their friends.

What do we do? This is a little recap and overview of what goes on in your youth ministry in a “normal” week. Our group meets for Sunday School at 9:45 am. We meet jointly for the first 15 minutes, then split into two groups: 7th-9th grades & 10th - 12th grades. We use the KNOWN Sunday School curriculum from Lifeway. Please be praying these classes continue to grow!

Youth CrossTraining meets at 5:00 pm on Sunday nights. Attendance is steadily growing for this Discipleship Training time. We are seeing between 17 - 25 youth on a regular basis! CrossTraining provides a deeper dive into His Word and how it applies to the life of a growing believer.

The youth also meet on Wednesday nights at 5:45 for Joyful Noise practice. This is also growing with an average attendance of 20 youth. We follow choir practice with a 6:45 meal prepared and provided by a dedicated team of adult volunteers who feel called to help support and encourage the young people God sends our way. I am very thankful for the efforts of each person who serves in this capacity. The meals are always great and, best of all, they are at no cost to the church. This time provides not only a good meal for these youth but, even more importantly, a time for us to fellowship together - to build relationships among each other and with many adults in our church. The meal is followed with Bible study in the youth room. Typically, we have between 42 - 52 youth each Wednesday night. I am always struck with humble amazement and thankfulness at the way God is working! He is honoring the faithful prayers you have been lifting up as well as your acts of kindness and encouragement!

What do we do in there? Through preaching, teaching, video and other mediums, the youth are challenged with messages as we are led by the Spirit to teach. Some recent lessons taught: the book of Titus, “Living Life in View of Eternity” (Col 3:1-2), “All Means All” (2 Kings 17), “Holiness” (2 Peter), “Reputation Matters” (2 Chronicles & Jeremiah), “Experiencing the Abundance of God” (Joshua 3), Job, “God's Word and Homosexuality”, and “There's no Neutrality” (1 Kings 18). This is just a sampling of what we have been teaching. With the interaction during lessons, there is no time left for games and activities. Our activity is the pouring out of His Word. And, clearly, youth are interested in hearing the Truth. It's more challenging for us as leaders to always have a lesson prepared and delivered but, the MOST important thing is exposing youth to the Truth in a world where they are surrounded and inundated with lies. I am also excited that Cindy Furtick, our WMU Director, is joining us as she can on these nights and will be leading in the mission activities and lessons of our youth in cooperation with the many different opportunities presented through our church.

I say all this because I know that I often fall short in communicating to our church family what is happening on Wednesdays and Sundays. I invite anyone interested to drop in from time to time. You're always welcome. Through your sacrificial giving and endless prayers, this ministry is vibrant and making a difference. For that, I am extremely thankful! We are experiencing an unprecedented harvest but, the sad story is there are so many students in our immediate area who are not connected to any church at all. Informally surveying other youth programs in our area, our estimate is that less than 15% of the students in Lexington District 4 are involved in any church! The harvest is plentiful, the challenges are sometimes...well, challenges!...but our mandate and our mission is clear!

Privileged to be Serving our Most Awesome God,

Bobby



SUNDAY SCHOOL WITH KEITH SPIRES, DIRECTOR



Our Study for October

It's a Miracle!

Weekly lesson topics for the month

Oct. 2 - Glory Revealed ~ Oct. 9 - Forgiveness Offered

Oct. 16 - Hope Discovered ~ Oct. 23 - Wholeness Restored

Oct. 30 - Satisfaction Found



The basic unit of Sunday School is the class. Class structure includes the teacher(s) and members. We should all work to together to make our classes a safe and hospitable environment.

I would like to encourage everyone in Sunday School to INVITE unchurched friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors to come and join us on Sunday mornings for Bible Study.

Members of the class can DISCOVER as a group the great truths of the Bible and how to apply them daily.

Members can then CONNECT with each other through fellowship and ministry as a group.

In church and not attending Sunday School ?

We will help you find a class so that you can further your growth in Christ.

Care enough to invite someone to Sunday School

SHELF LIFE WITH PETER JUMPER, MEDIA LIBRARY DIRECTOR~FILLING IN THIS MONTH IS PHYLLIS TEMPLETON

BOOK REVIEW

Do you ever watch any of the "reality shows"? If you have watched very many of them, you will know that they are not "reality" at all, but are somewhat scripted. Let me tell you of a book that is really "reality". (Other than the Bible, of course.) The name of the book is SEVEN FROM HEAVEN, by Kenny and Bobbi McCaughey, pronounced McCoy. They are the parents of the septuplets born in the late ninety's. It tells of their desire for an additional child, the difficulty in conceiving, the pregnancy, and birth of the septuplets. More important than that, it is a story of faith, hope and encouragement. A faith that God is always with us, especially during our most difficult times. The book also includes pictures! This is the REAL MCCOY!!

If you like Christian fiction, check out DEEPER WATER by Robert Whitlow. Both of these books will be on the display table in the library for easy check-out.

Also, if you are planning to donate any books to our library, please hold off for a while.

We are running out of room!! I guess that is a good thing.

Substituting for Peter Jumper,

Phyllis Templeton.



CHILDREN'S NEWS WITH RHONDA PARRISH, CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR

K
I
D
S

*Food*Games*

Prizes

Trunk-or-Treat

Music

FREE

FREE



First Baptist Church, Gaston

Harvest Festival

Monday, October 31, 2011

6:00—8:00 PM

Donations for candy are now being accepted in the Welcome Center.

A Trick or Treating Alternative

For children through grade 6

FREE

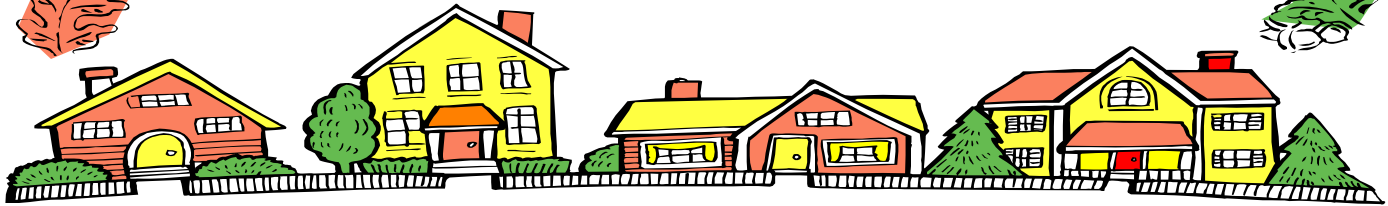
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Weekly Schedule

Sunday
 09:45am.....Sunday School
 11:00am.....Worship
 11:00am..Children's Worship
 05:00pm.....Adult Choir
 05:00pm.....Discipleship
 06:00pm.....Worship
 Monday
 3:00pm....Ladies' & Men's
 Prayer Time
 Wednesday
 6:00 PM Joyful Noise, Jr &
 Youth Choir practice
 7:00pm.Prayer Service
 7:00pm.....GA, RA &
 Mission Friends

Monthly Meetings:

1st Wednesday all mission
 groups meet 7:00PM
 3rd Wednesday Conference/
 Prayer Service 7:00PM
 3rd Monday Women on
 Mission Home Meeting 6:15
 Last Tuesday of Month
 Deacons Meeting
 Check bulletins & website for
 additional activities.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF GASTON WELCOMES YOU!!
"THE CARING PLACE"

We are here to minister to you and your loved ones and to help strengthen your faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST. If you are not currently attending a church, we invite you to join us. See our weekly schedule to the left of page.

Many new parents choose "Bible names" for their babies. Of the following names, which two (one boy's and one girl's) are not found in Scripture?
 (A) Eunice (B) Priscilla
 (C) Judith (D) Clara (E) Derek (F) Obed
 (G) Reuben (H) Joel

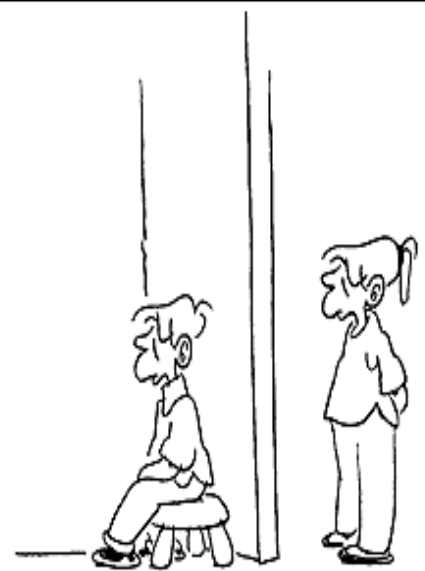


Answer: D and F

"No man ever got very high by pulling other people down.... Don't knock your friends. Don't knock your enemies. Don't knock yourself."

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson

"God is in the business of taking old pieces of our lives, refinishing them and, at just the right time, surprising us with newfound beauty." —Susan Duke



"I'm glad we don't speak in tongues. One keeps me in enough trouble."